

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 12903

EO 11652/ XGDS-1
TAGS: PGEN UR US
SUBJECT: TASS ON THE CONDUCT OF SOVIET FIREMEN
DURING THE EMBASSY FIRE

REF: MOSCOW 12859 (NOTAL)

1. (BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED) A TASS ITEM APPEARED IN PRAVDA SEPT
6 ON THE SUBJECT OF AMERICAN NEWS COMMENTARY ON THE CONDUCT
OF SOVIET FIREMEN DURING THE EMBASSY FIRE. TEXT OF ITEM,
ENTITLED "FICTION AND FACT", FOLLOWS:
BEGIN TEXT: ENEMIES OF THE SOVIET UNION ARE READY
TO USE ANY PRETEXT FOR ANTI-SOVIET FANTASIES. THIS TIME
THEY WERE NOT EVEN EMBARRASSED TO CAST ASPERSIONS ON THE
ACTIONS OF SOVIET FIREMEN WHO, IN THE GENERAL OPINION OF
EYE WITNESSES --AMERICAN AND SOVIET--DISPLAYED COURAGE
AND SELFLESSNESS IN EXTINGUISHING THE FIRE WHICH BROKE
OUT IN THE U.S. EMBASSY IN MOSCOW ON AUGUST 27. THESE
COCK-AND-BULL STORIES WERE PROMPTLY TAKEN UP BY THE
NEWSPAPER THE NEW YORK TIMES AND OTHER U.S. NEWS
AGENCIES. SEVERAL AMERICAN DIPLOMATS CONTRIBUTED
THEIR "BIT" TO THIS CAMPAIGN, BUT THEIR POSITION
CLEARLY CONTRADICTED THE ESTIMATION MADE OF THE
ACTIONS OF SOVIET FIREMEN BY U.S. AMBASSADOR M. TOON
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HIMSELF.
IN A LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE U.S.S.R. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS, THE AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED "GRATITUDE
AND THANKS" IN THE NAME OF EMBASSY PERSONNEL AND THE
AMERICAN GOVERNMENT FOR THE ACTIONS OF THE PROFESSIONAL
SOVIET FIREMEN AND THEIR CHIEFS. "IT WAS PRECISELY
THEIR INITIATIVE AND COURAGE" --STATES THE LETTER"--

"WHICH HELPED TO SAVE THE AMERICAN EMBASSY FROM DESTRUCTION, AND IN THIS CONNECTION WHAT THEY DID DESERVES THE HIGHEST APPRECIATION."
ANOTHER LETTER, WHICH M. TOON ADDRESSED TO THE CHIEF OF THE MAIN ADMINISTRATION FOR FIRE PROTECTION OF THE U.S.S.R. MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS, MAJOR-GENERAL OF THE INTERNAL SERVICE F.V. OBUKHOV, EXPRESSES GRATITUDE FOR THE "MODEL ACTIONS" OF SOVIET FIREMEN AND FOR THE "NUMEROUS EXAMPLES OF PERSONAL COURAGE WHICH THEY DISPLAYED."
IN THE LIGHT OF THESE FACTS, THE ACTIONS BY OPPONENTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS APPEAR VERY UNSEEMLY." (END UNCLASSIFIED)

2. (BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL XGDS-1) IN A RELATED DEVELOPMENT, DURING THE SPASO HOUSE DINNER IN HONOR OF CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER SEPTEMBER 5 MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS SHCHELOKOV EXPRESSED APPRECIATION TO THE AMBASSADOR FOR THE AMBASSADOR'S LETTER TO GENERAL OBUKHOV. SHCHELOKOV, WHO WAS RELAXED AND CORDIAL THROUGHOUT THE EVENING, SAID NOTHING ABOUT THE "PILFERING" ISSUE.

3. COMMENT: WHILE IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT TASS CHOSE TO CAST THIS MATTER IN TERMS OF "ENEMIES OF THE SOVIET UNION", THE TASS PIECE IS LESS NEGATIVE REGARDING THE EMBASSY THAN WAS DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER KORNIYENKO'S
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ORAL DEMARCHE OF SEPTEMBER 5 (REFTEL). APPARENTLY THE SOVIETS DECIDED THEIR STRONGEST PUBLIC ARGUMENT ON THIS ISSUE WOULD BE TO CONTRAST THE AMBASSADOR'S WRITTEN COMMENDATIONS OF THE PROFESSIONAL FIREMEN WITH NEGATIVE COMMENTS OF "CERTAIN AMERICAN DIPLOMATS" AND THE UNFRIENDLY COVERAGE GIVEN THIS MATTER BY US NEWS MEDIA. AS IS TYPICAL OF TASS, THE OTHERWISE UNINFORMED SOVIET READER IS LEFT IN THE DARK ABOUT ACTUAL ISSUE, I.E., PETTY PILFERING BY SOME SOVIETS IN FIREMEN'S UNIFORMS.
(END CONFIDENTIAL XGDS-1).
TOON

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Message Attributes

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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 06-Sep-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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